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10-10-2001

### "J. A. Wayland and His Appeal to Reason"

Sharon Neet

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# Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture

## Fourth Annual - October 10, 2001

**"J. A. Wayland and His Appeal to Reason"**

*Sharon Neet, speaker*

*Axe Library*

*6:30 p.m.*

The fourth Gene DeGruson Memorial Lecture will be held on October 10 at the Axe Library on the campus of Pittsburg State University. The event, sponsored by the Friends of Axe Library, is open to the public.

Activities will begin at 6:30 p.m. on the northwest lawn of the Library with the dedication of a plaque memorializing the life of Gene DeGruson. DeGruson was the founding Curator of Special Collections at Pittsburg State University and a recognized authority on southeast Kansas history. There will be comments by Stephen Meats, chairman of the PSU English department; Roger O'Connor, bookseller and owner of Mostly Books in Pittsburg; Sharon Neet, history professor at the University of Minnesota at Crookston; and Charles Cagle, emeritus professor of the PSU English Department. Each will give a remembrance of Gene as poet, teacher, scholar, and friend.

Following the dedication, at 7:00 the activities will move into Axe Library where Dr. Sharon Neet will present the DeGruson Memorial Lecture on "J. A. Wayland and His Appeal to Reason." Dr. Neet will present information from the research she began with Gene DeGruson and has continued since his death in 1997.

Self-made in the nineteenth century tradition, Julius Augustus Wayland (1854-1912) founded a third-party newspaper which became the most widely circulated political publication in the world. As a propagandist for the early socialist movement in the United States, Wayland and his newspaper operation had an impact on southeast Kansas and the nation during its twenty-seven year run from 1895 to 1922. Socialism in Wayland's day described a wide variety of political and social philosophies. Active at the turn of the twentieth century were the Socialist Labor Party, the Social Democracy, the Social Democratic Party, the Socialist Party of America, the Industrial Workers of the World, and independent Socialists who adhered to none of the formal organizations.

Socialists of all persuasions advocated civil liberties with a special concern for the working classes. They promoted the eight-hour workday, as opposed to the then traditional ten to twelve hour day. They favored equal pay for women and the abolition of child labor. They felt workers should be treated equally regardless of race, color, or sex. All factions of Socialists supported state ownership of the means of production and distribution, although they were often divided on the farm question - whether land should belong to the farmer or to the government. Federal control of utilities and means of transportation was agreed upon, as was direct popular control over legislation. The most important unifying and organizing element of the American Socialist

movement was Wayland's newspaper, the Appeal to Reason, a weekly, independent Socialist publication located in Girard, Kansas.

Dr. Neet has presented research on Wayland and the Appeal to Reason at numerous national and regional history conferences. Together with DeGruson, she has also presented a poster display of Wayland and Appeal materials at a meeting of the Organization of American Historians. For the lecture Neet will take her material from the biography of Wayland that was in preparation at the time of Gene DeGruson's death. The talk will be illustrated with photographs from the Appeal to Reason archives held by the Special Collections Department of Axe Library.

Following the lecture will be a reception and opportunity to tour the recent Axe Library renovations, including the new computer lab and instruction classroom on the first floor and areas for bound periodicals and special collections on the lower level.